

Birchanger

December 2013



Magazine

Issue 132

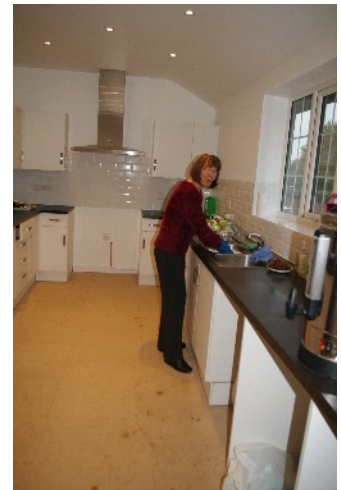
HOW DID WE DO THIS YEAR?

Well it's been quite a year in the village. Starting in one of the coldest winters for years half the village was ravaged by the so called Noro Virus. It got me so I know how nasty it was.

Then in March Birchanger Lane was re surfaced yippee! Then it was dug up in June for electrical work and again in August due to a sewer collapse.

Also in March St Mary's underwent some successful surgery providing a toilet on site for the first time. We also had a spate of bogus badger sett reporting which upset the Uttlesford badger officer.

In April there was a dispute over footpath usage between the equestrian minded villagers and cyclists which now seems to have died down.



Carol in the kitchen

The late Spring saw a visit to the Bowls club from the Chelsea Pensioners. The Bowls club celebrated their centenary in the mean time and had some success at the Essex fours.

In the Summer both the Club and Church Hall commenced improvement works(see the photos). Meanwhile business continued to improve at the Willows winning an award from Trip Advisor before hosting the first fun day of the year.

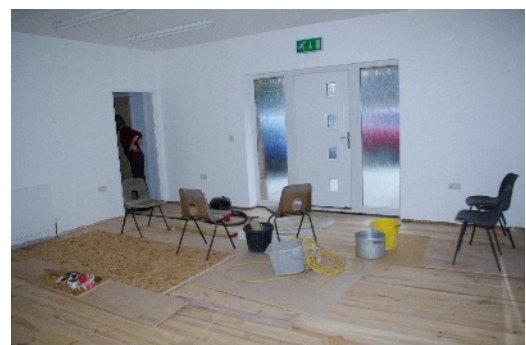
More sporting success was achieved with the cricket club winning their league title as well as the Sunday football club gaining promotion.

September saw a combined fete on the club field and for the first time a dog show. The shine was somewhat taken off this by poor weather and the fact that the club decided to ban dogs from the club.

The club also entered into a more formal sponsorship arrangement with the magazine which should improve the club's marketing especially within the village.

So things in Birchanger appear to be improving. Lets continue into 2014

Merry Christmas all



Unfinished but ready to go



PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

Elizabeth Godwin

A brilliant start to Christmas!

That was what Birchanger did on November 30th when many people took up the invitation to switch on their Christmas lights to brighten up the gloom of the longer winter nights and to welcome the approach of Christmas.

The village looked really bright and cheerful with displays so good, that families took their children to walk through the village and to enjoy the Christmas scene.

People also had the opportunity to vote for their favourite display, thanks to the coupon and instructions in the November edition of this magazine. The winner will be announced at the club on the evening of Friday December 20th.

A big thank you to everyone for taking part and giving a piece of Christmas to everyone who passed through the village.

Sewage pipes under pressure

Most of our sewage system was installed in the fifties and should serve us well for many years to come, that is if we simply put the items for which it was designed into the system.

The plain fact of the matter is that we don't. Some people regularly dispose of sanitary items, wipes, cotton wool balls, cotton buds and the occasional nappy into the toilet system. This delightful collection binds together with the solidified fats from umpteen improperly wiped plates. Bound together they form a wall in the sewage pipe which results in a total blockage of the pipe and the inevitable flooding of the homes of other people further down the road. The roads are likewise flooded leaving a ghastly white wake of fat and other undesirables for motorists to skid on and pedestrians to avoid.

This need never ever happen if people would only leave fat to cool and place in the food bins, and to dispose of wet wipes, sanitary items, cotton buds and cotton wool in the black bin where they belong.

Believe me, other peoples sewage flooding into your toilets, baths and sinks is something you definitely do not want, ever and certainly not at Christmas time.

Are you fit to travel?

It is the time of year, almost as soon as the presents are unwrapped, thoughts turn to better weather and sunnier climes encouraged by all manner of tempting Boxing Day offers. It seems too hard to resist, but can you be sure that you are really fit to travel?

I ask this because travel by whatever mode of transport is a struggle. If you go by car you are stuck in endless traffic jams as it seems that everyone has chosen the same destination and time of travel as you. Well it was either go then or be fined for removing your child from school. So you try the train, only to discover that everyone else got there first and strap hanging on the 17. 49 with children, baggage and buggies is hardly appealing.

So you choose to fly. Was that exactly wise? You did not plan on spending two days at the airport with a diversion or two to airports you had never even heard of, and the use of at least nine differing forms of transport before you reach your final destination thrown in for your further entertainment. When you book in the long dark days of January you only see the destination not the means of getting there.

The actual holiday might be the best ever. You forget all the struggles to get there and it is all over far too quickly. Then you are back down to earth with a bump and the memories of the struggle to get home are the ones which linger. It does not seem to matter which time of year you go now, as storms, fog, strikes and transport closures happen all year round.

So are you really fit for all this? In the dark days of winter you believe you are, until? And yes, it all really did happen. Happy Holidays?

We need a better neighbour.

We would all like to get on with our neighbours. Like it or not they are a part of our daily lives and good neighbours can be among our very best friends. However, we all live alongside a neighbour who is noisy, on occasions smelly, churns up prime farmland, takes listed buildings and brings a great deal of additional traffic to our village. You would think they might like to make amends on occasions. I mean, of course, the airport.

While the airport does benefit the odd charity occasionally in Birchanger most of the time it brings us grief in one way or another. It does supply employment, fine if you can take the mainly unsocial hours.

This neighbour costs us dear. We do need to access it on occasions, but we do not have a convenient direct bus route to the airport. The bus tends to visit every single village it can think of first, taking an outrageously long time about it as well, which rules that out as a convenient means of access. So what is left? Well you can drive at a cost. There is free parking for one hour at the mid stay car park with a bus every five minutes, that is for those who actually know where that is. If you meet someone you have 10 minutes of free parking at the airport car park in front of the terminal, that is if you choose the right sign to express parking, not the one which will cost you £50. Try getting that refunded! You can actually register as a resident of Uttlesford for 50p parking at the terminal for ten minutes, that is if the website and telephone system works. It has failed for me and others at four attempts.

How about a taxi? Good idea, until you get the bill. It is much higher than that for a journey that does not involve the airport. This is because the franchised taxis have to pay dearly for their concession and the other taxi firms are charged large amounts simply to drop off their passengers. I accessed Dunmow for the same fare and took the train to London for roughly the same price. Then there are the strange cars who park on bends, at bus stops and who block drives, sometimes for over two weeks. Often they arrive in the night and some are never picked up. If they have up to date car tax and have obviously bald tyres, the police or the district council can take action, otherwise there is very little anyone can do about them. They park where they do because the airport parking costs break all known records, but this can provoke such bitterness among local residents that sometimes the owners return to find some unwelcome and illegal alterations to their vehicles.

Other drivers who have arrived early or found the flights delayed block and spoil our verges while they park away from the airport to await the planes, in order to avoid paying the heavy car park charges. It is not their fault the plane is late. Contractors at the airport do the same stunt by parking their many vans to squeeze into one to curb their parking costs while they work at the airport.

The Manchester Airport Group who now own the airport are well aware of our concerns. They are aware of the poor signage on their forecourt and have loosely said they intend to do something about it, but when?

There is a more up to date number to report cars we think are related to the airport and we do not report what we suspect anything like enough in Birchanger. The number to call is 08007312385. If we do not use this, it is very hard to convince the airport that we do have a problem.

Christmas Norwegian style.

Christmas in Norway is very much a family affair. In the long Norwegian winter darkness, Christmas is planned from early November when Christmas lights brighten the

24 hour long nights and the shops fill with very attractive Christmas items.

Surprisingly it is also a very patriotic occasion. The Norwegians also celebrate their country along with all the other Christmas traditions. The family and friends usually gather on Christmas Eve, sing carols, eat and then finally Father Christmas arrives with presents for the children. The celebrations on Christmas Day start in the afternoon then continue until late at night. The family gather around the huge Christmas tree, form a circle and sing more carols and Norwegian songs. Then they eat a huge Christmas Buffet, and it is back to the tree for more songs as well as the odd game. It is quite late in the evening when the presents finally get to be opened. As a child I would have found that quite a struggle, although I would probably have attempted the odd sneaky peak at my presents some time before.

For those in the far north it must be quite difficult to work out just when Christmas Day begins and ends. There is total darkness from November 22nd until the end of January right across the Arctic Circle. Our dark afternoons are more than enough to cope with!

Meanwhile back In Birchanger,

The Christmas Fair Season has been well and truly underway. It began with the bright and well stocked fair hosted in the still incomplete village hall by the over sixties club. Next came the school Christmas Bazaar which was attended of course by Father Christmas and for which the children held their second non uniform Friday to raise money for and to create their own special tombola as well as to make items to sell.

There were well stocked hampers and a seemingly endless supply of raffle prizes. After participating in the fair which spread right across the main school, a cup of tea and a cake was very welcome. Even more astounding was the money the bazaar raised. The final total on the day was a staggering £3021. 65.

The last Christmas Fair was the one run by the Church, in the very nearly finished Village Hall. There are still more finishing touches to be done, but some renovations to the old part of the hall will have to wait until there are more funds.

Our Christmas Present From Uttlesford District Council.

I am uncertain just how many people will actually benefit from this "gift", but if you choose to use a car park in the district of Uttlesford, it will be completely free over the Christmas period. This means that there will be free parking for everyone in Saffron Walden, Dunmow and Stansted for the Christmas period.

Time for last minute presents and shopping for the New Year. Enjoy!
Happy Christmas.

School News

Website Updated

School Secretary Carolyn Field has just finished updating the school website. In addition to new information it also gives up to date information to everyone on its Bulletin Board. This will include details of school closures due to adverse conditions.

That Time of the Year at Birchanger School

From half term onwards in the Autumn term there is a certain buzz about the school. First there is the Children in Need Dress Up Friday where the children raised some £253 for Children in Need by dressing up in stripes or dots, making cakes and holding all manner of class events during the day. Then there are the preparations for the Christmas Fair itself, with another dressing up day while the final touches were put to all the items they had made which were to be sold at the next day. They brought with them items for sale beginning with the letter c.

Finally work started on the not to be missed Nativity Play performed by Classes 1 and 2. There was the special Carol Service in the church, a visit to see Aladdin at the Rhodes Centre and of course the usual Christmas Parties to anticipate. School is never quite so much fun as it is in December.

Ladybirds are at Home

After just a few weeks at school the four year olds and newly fives are settling exceptionally well. Despite having the largest intake in recent years, the transition from home and nursery to school has worked incredibly well. The children are well settled, confident and a pleasure to be around.

Nursery Open Day.

Birchanger Nursery held a very successful open day last month. The unit welcomed some twenty new families to the nursery, where they were able to see the excellent facilities, while their children tried out the equipment. Many children were reluctant to leave.

The only problem seemed to be that some families from outside Birchanger found the unit difficult to locate, while some had not even known of its existence until the Open Day was advertised.

The success of this day means there will shortly be another one arranged for those who were unable to come last one.

Paranoia at the Church Hall

On Saturday December 7th I decided to go and photograph the new extension to the church hall. When I arrived I realised that the hall was in use since the car park was full. There was apparently a private children's party going on.

So I took my first shot and then explored around the rear of the building. And then things took a rather unpleasant turn. Two gentlemen came out of the hall asking. "Why I was taking pictures of the kids?" I explained who I was and why I was there and I even showed one of them the shot I had taken which you can see below.

But it goes to show how an innocent activity can be seen by some in a threatening light.

Apparently Man plus camera where there are children present equals pervert! What a sad indictment of modern society. But I suppose you can't be too careful.

And to any one who was upset by my unexpected presence in the car park. My apologies I did not expect the hall to be in use.



Ed



Live Entertainment - Great Food - Excellent Bar - Snooker - Darts - Pool – Football - Cricket - Bowls



BIG WIN FOR BIRCHANGER AS £1,400 RETURNS TO TREASURE CHEST

November 2013 was a great month for the club's treasure chest game. After seeing the jackpot steadily rise and member after member try their luck at picking the magic key to the infamous pot of gold it was crunch time. The club was packed to the rafters and everyone had one thing on their mind, the £2,800 sat in the treasure chest with only two keys to go. As the tension mounted and the evening progressed only one person would get a chance to face the chest and they would be faced with a big decision: 1) Take their chances, choose the winning key and walk away with £2,800, or the wrong key and leave empty handed. 2) Take the 50:50 and walk away there and then with £1,400, leaving the other £1,400 to go straight into the next treasure chest game. Presided over by Birchanger's very own Noel Edmonds aka Dave Woods the command was given and his very beautiful assistant Claire pushed the button... Tense silence was followed by a barrage of noise as Alan Hogg's number came up. There was no shortage of enthusiastic advice coming from the crowd, everyone had their opinion, but Alan was a man with a mission (and a wife to take on holiday) so his mind was resolute: Take the £1,400 and make 2013 a Christmas to remember! The crowd erupted, perhaps testament to Alan's popularity as a regular club-goer, or maybe because everyone realised that this meant next time as the game starts with another set of thirteen keys there will be an unprecedented £1,400 sat there from the word go! So let's see who the next big winner will be. Could 2014 be your lucky year?



Beat the January Blues BSSC-style!

January can be a hard month in every household, money's tight after Christmas, everyone's used up all their enthusiasm pretending to like the tie from Aunt Nora or the ironing board from our no longer better-half. So this is the perfect time to sign up to Birchanger Sports and Social Club. As membership is renewed in January, make the most of this normally drab time of year to discover one of the area's best kept secrets. With great value food and drinks from £2.20/pint as well as regular entertainment on offer, the club will be the place to go in January. So if in 2014 you want to make a resolution you won't regret, join the club and come and find out what we're talking about! Deadline for renewals 31st January

Sports Field investment paying off

Last year saw the club make considerable investment to improve the condition of the sports fields, adding drainage and reconditioning the pitches. 2013 has seen the fruits of these labours show, with the pitches standing up to the inclement weather and allowing us to play come rain or shine. Under Ross Leavers' lead the club is committed to making these the best possible facilities for our own and visiting sports clubs, and it is great that the 'rain stops play' excuse is much less likely to be heard moving forward.





Live Entertainment - Great Food - Excellent Bar - Snooker - Darts - Pool – Football - Cricket - Bowls

Cellar to be proud of

One of the benefits of being free from the shackles of brewery ownership, is that the club can act as that increasingly rare beast – the 'Free House'. The club is regularly offering limited edition ales, lagers and other drinks to make sure our members can always get their perfect pint. Ultimately, the members through feedback and choosing their favourite tippie ensure we keep up to date, like with the latest edition to the pumps: ADNAMS LIGHTHOUSE. At only £2.20 per pint this light golden ale, is set to be a hit with beer-lovers, but don't just take our word for it – come and try it for yourself.

Reminder! Poker Night 27th December
(buffet included)



Why not bridge the gap between Christmas and New Year at our Poker Night. Not only could your cards pay off, but there's even a free buffet on offer



Christmas Period Calendar – Food & Opening Times

Day	Open	Close	Food	Entertainment / Function
23 rd Dec Monday	19.00	23.00	No Food	Quiz night
24 th Dec Christmas Eve	11.30	24.00	No Food	Entertainment – Ruby Groove
25 th Dec Christmas Day	12.00	14.00	No Food	None
26 th Dec Boxing Day	12.00	17.00	No Food	Whiskey draw
27 th Dec Friday	11.30	23.30	Food lunchtime	Poker Night with buffet
28 th Dec Saturday	11.30	23.00	Food Lunch & Evening	Special Treasure Chest Game
29 th Dec Sunday	11.30	23.00	Food Lunchtime	Free pool, snooker & Juke box
30 th Dec Monday	19.00	23.00	No Food	Quiz Night
31 st Dec New Year's Eve	12.00	00.30	No Food	Entertainment Disco Night
1 st Jan New Year's Day	12.00	17.00	No Food	None

The Officers, Committee and Staff would like to take this opportunity to wish all our members a happy Christmas and prosperous New Year

Keep up to speed.com

Birchangerclub.com is more than just a simple website, it is your one stop shop to organising your week's entertainment. Bored of turkey leftovers? Then go online and check there's a great value quality meal available at the club that evening. Can't face the Christmas party after last year's incident with the photocopier? Log on and see what entertainment and fun you could be having at the club instead! Not sure where to send a Christmas card to thank the great bar staff.... well you get the idea:
www.birchangerclub.com



Debonair Darts Team thanks to Hills Prospect PLC

The South East's largest independent drinks distributor came up trumps for the darts team, continuing their sponsorship and giving them a snazzy new kit as they sit pretty at 5th place in the league.

News from St Mary's

On Saturday 30th November St Mary's held their annual Christmas Bazaar in the newly enhanced Church Hall.

Over one hundred adults paid 50p for their tea and mince pies and lots of children attended as well. It was also good to see the rector and his wife in attendance. A plethora of varied stalls were open and doing brisk trade when I arrived.

Sue's Cake stall had practically sold out when I got there. While Rosemary Sayward's Preserves were a priority purchase for me. Pam Lee had a whole table full of Christmassy items. There was a book stall, tombola, a bottle stall, bric a brac a grand raffle and of course Ken Sturgeon's Play your cards right. Where I bet higher on a king and still lost to an ace.



Standing room only

The event was also a good excuse for me to have a look at the improvements to the hall and the kitchen and the new meeting room both look very nicely done

The bazaar raised £1012.70 a record for the church. Last year it was £715 and the year before £557. So this goes to show how generous people were and how well it was supported. Grateful thanks to all who helped set up and then worked tirelessly on the stalls. Hope to see as many people at Moorswood for the next Coffee Morning and the Evening Carol service.

Thank you all.



Just remember
the EU want to stop all of this



The irrepressible Ken fleeces another punter

Christmas Events

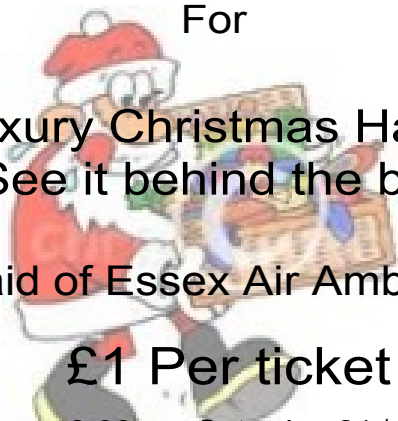
Three Willows Christmas Raffle
For

A Luxury Christmas Hamper
See it behind the bar

In aid of Essex Air Ambulance

£1 Per ticket

To be drawn 8.00 pm Saturday 21st December
See Staff for more details



St Mary the Virgin

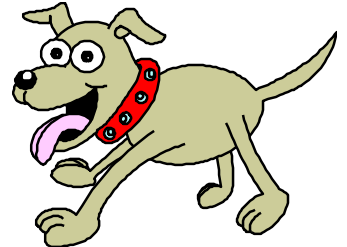
Carol Service

Friday December 20th

From 7.00 pm



Canine Corner



Where the dogs of Birchanger
can have their say

Ruff Justice

Dear Ed

I was touched by Pixie's letter in last month's Birchanger Magazine and so just had to write to say that it's time we dogs had more say in the running of the village, especially the Village Club.

I'm sort of restricted at present because I'm currently banned from the Club. In fact, all dogs are banned from the Club and there's a big red sign on the doors to say so. It's for no good reason and I said to Pixie "It's high time we had more dogs on the Committee". Pixie replied - disdainfully - "You need to keep up".

Pixie said that the people on the Club Committee were even more clever than Border Collies and almost any other breed of dog and they could do almost anything they wanted to do, which was - apart from the free beer - why they were on the Club Committee. Otherwise they would have no power to do anything at all. Pixie is so clever.

When I first moved to the village I was made really welcome by the Duck End dogs. They are really nice - personality-wise, although not too nice to look at. Some say that they are interbred - as well as being French - which is just about the worst combination you could ever imagine.

Worse still, they have a gang - the Birchanger Slickers" and they hold wild parties in Birchanger Woods every Saturday night. I've recently noticed their carvings on the trees in Birchanger Wood - "We are Slickers".

Pixie invited me to these Saturday night parties with the Birchanger Slickers and I explained that I wasn't allowed out on my own at night. However, one of these funny French dogs from Duck End gave me some advice as to how I could escape and join the Saturday night party with all the other Birchanger dogs. All I had to do was to do a big poo in the hall in the middle of "Strictly". Master and Mistress would be so angry that they would kick me out the door - and I could then join in the fun down the woods.

Alas, that is not what happened. The 'poo' bit went according to plan but Master was so angry that he rubbed my nose in it over and over again. Ouch! Yuk! Ouch!

I was then locked up for the night in my bed in the kitchen.

When out walking the next day I met Pixie. "Why didn't you join us last night" she said "We had a fantastic time in Birchanger Wood. All the other Birchanger dogs were there." I explained what happened - as if I had to - because she could see the state of my squashed nose.

"Well" - said Pixie - "You need to try again next Saturday. You need to persevere!"

"Persevere?", I said doubtfully, "...with a squashed nose, and end up looking like one of these Duck End dogs?!"

Merry Christmas

Velke

And if that wasn't enough

I'm livid – just read Pixie's letter in Canine Corner – not a mention of me!

All those dog newcomers – what do they know? I've been in this village for 12 years and really know my way around. In my time I have discovered every garden that has a bird table within reach or a compost heap that might contain some kitchen waste or best of all dishes of cat or hedgehog food...Yummm

It's not that I am hungry as my owner feeds me only the best of dog food – it's just the fun of finding a way over, under or through every type of fence around my garden.

It has become a really challenging and exciting game with every new and expensive fence my owner erects. But now I'm getting old and my legs are not too good so I have to hope someone leaves a gate open for me to have a wander.

I now can't jump into other people's gardens but recently I have found a great new source of tasty titbits and no fences to climb and when me and my owner are out walking, I can sometimes run off across the fields and disappear. She had no idea where I used to go but last week she caught me red-handed – eating chips in the Three Willows garden – and delicious they were too!

So all you well behaved dogs – how about breaking out and joining me down the pub for a bite to eat?

Purdie

From the archive

From Ruth Clewer's exercise book comes the very earliest mention of the church hall

The Church Hall October 9th 1935

A new Church Hall has been erected on the piece of ground a little way from the Church. It is very attractive outside as well inside. It was put up by private subscriptions and there is still about £200 owing.

It has a very strong foundation. The roof is made of cedar shingles. We have electric light and gas in it in the form of gas heaters and a gas cooker. The electric light is mainly in the main hall.

Mrs Banks does the sweeping up as well as other odd jobs. Yesterday there was a sale held in the new hall and also a Whist drive was held later on in the evening.

Three Willows New Years Eve Party Menu

The price quoted in last month's issue for this event was unfortunately incorrect. The correct price is £49.95. The editor apologises for any confusion caused.

Christmas Entertainment at the club

December 24th Ruby Groove - professional female duo offering the very best of live music

December 26th Whisky Draw

December 27th Poker Night

December 28th Special Treasure Chest Game – Win the money in the box on the night!



Ruby Groove 24th

One final comment from the dogs

I'm Lola 'May', and not many people know, that I am the one dog responsible for keeping Birchanger from being over run by rabbits and squirrels. Oh yes they (my humans) call it "walkies", but what they don't know is that I am on a mission to chase, harass and bother those animals so much that they won't come near to our village at all. So far it's working. I get them to help me patrol, Hatfield Forest, Digby Wood and the near reaches of Birchanger Wood. Even in the rain we go there, they with their macs on me soaking wet, as they haven't bothered to get me a coat! But I don't care I circle trees on my back legs barking and staring up at my prey until they fade away into the distance.

So you see I am one of your unsung heroes and, no, I don't want any thanks just let me continue, chasing, digging and barking on your behalf, the pleasure is all mine!!

Lola

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THE THREE WILLOWS



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More than just
your village Pub!

Village Diary

December 2013/

January 2014

December

20th 7.00 pm St Mary's
Carol Service

22nd 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

29th 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

31st

January

1st

5th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

12th 11.00 am St Mary's
Matins

19th 11.00 am St Mary's
Family Service

26th 11.00 am St Mary's
Holy Communion

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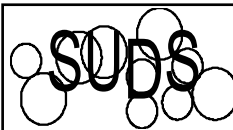
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